
Obituary

John Hamel Elgood

1909–1998

John Elgood was born at Dulwich on 16 June 1909. He was educated at Whitgift Middle School and St Catherine's College, Cambridge. He taught at Regent Street Polytechnic and was from there recruited for the new University of Ibadan. His early interest was marine biology but he soon realised the ornithological potential of Ibadan and was leading bird walks and lecturing on birds. He had a pact with Ronald Keay (at that time Chief Conservator of Forests) that he would teach Ronald birds in exchange for instruction on flora.

He saw a need for a small guide on birds and in 1960 brought out his *Birds of the West African Town and Garden*. This stimulated interest in birds and in 1964 the Nigerian Ornithologists' Society was formed with John as Secretary, Hilary Fry as Editor of the *Bulletin* and myself as Treasurer. John remained as Secretary and we produced regular bulletins until 1989, when the society metamorphosed into the West African Ornithological Society and John was appointed Vice-President.

John found and described a new species of *Malimbus* (*ibadanensis*), some of the work being done in his own garden. He produced a checklist *The Birds of Nigeria* in 1964 (British Ornithologists' Union, London) and when this went out of print he organised a team to produce a second edition in 1994 (BOU, Tring). The first book printed by Ibadan University Press was *Animal Classification* by Joe Webb and John Elgood and in 1964 John produced *Certificate Biology for Tropical Schools*.

John and his wife Peggy toured frequently in Nigeria and stayed with us in Kano many times. In 1962 he went with a team to Bornu to investigate the *Quelea* problem. He often told the story of how in an

expedition after a certain bird he got the bird but lost his trousers in the process. He had a great sense of humour and was very popular with his students and kept up with some of them (by now professors themselves) for many years.

John returned to England in 1965 and taught at Goldsmiths' College and the American University in Sussex. He was asked back to Nigeria and did a spell at Ahmadu Bello University (Zaria) and Lagos University. He helped with examinations in Rhodesia twice and taught for six months in Papua New Guinea. He came out to stay with me in Kano again in 1976 and produced a report on the wetlands between Hadejia and Nguru for Kano State Department of Agriculture. This led to the area being officially opened as a Wetland Reserve by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands.

John was an active member of the British Ornithologists' Union and British Ornithologists' Club serving on the Council of both societies. He was also a frequent lecturer in the Bournemouth Science Society.

John would have thoroughly approved of his memorial service in Highcliffe Methodist Church. We entered the church to the sound of bird-song on tape (one of his daughters threatened a questionnaire at the end of the service) and the service sheet was encircled by exotic birds holding glasses of wine. We have all lost a great friend. ☚

R.E. Sharland

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